

VZCZCXYZ0012
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSL #0117/01 0771346
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 171346Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1594

UNCLAS BRATISLAVA 000117

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PA/OBS/BS - GEORGE SANTULLI
ALSO FOR EUR/PPD, EUR/NCE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [ECPS](#) [KPAO](#) [LO](#)
SUBJECT: 2008 TV CO-OP PROPOSAL FOR SLOVAKIA

REF: STATE 16016

1. The proposed co-op will be directed by Brano Misik and aired by the national public broadcaster, STV, in prime time as two parts of a 15 part series. The project would cover three Embassy Bratislava priorities. First is mutual understanding, because even in this age of blogs and YouTube, much about America is misunderstood. Second is the MSP priority of increasing economic development, especially moving the economy beyond manufacturing and bringing development in the east to greater parity with that in the west of the country. Third is our ongoing effort to create realistic expectations regarding the Visa Waiver Program.

2. The image of America is distorted by media coverage that dwells on events connected with the War on Terrorism, which overshadows the concept of America as a haven for democracy and a place where one can live his or her "American dream". With the exception of NHL hockey stars, stories of young Slovaks who take part in the American dream are largely unknown in Slovakia. The proposed co-op will explain what it is like to travel to the US, to live there and what it takes for an "ordinary person" to achieve the American dream.

3. Concurrently, Slovakia is experiencing a reverse brain-drain: Increasingly young people who left Slovakia to acquire an education or professional experience abroad are returning. Since the country was until recently dealing with the opposite problem, the stories on how to utilize the experience of those returning are not known yet.

4. The number one bilateral issue for most Slovaks is when or if Slovakia will enter the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). There is much that is misunderstood about the process, particularly the belief that once one gets on a plane to the U.S. without a visa, work and education are freely available. Telling the stories of Slovaks in the U.S. will help dispel that myth, and better prepare Slovaks for what is and is not permissible under the VWP.

5. Proposal: The goal of the project is to refute the stereotypes that some Slovak people have of the United States as well as to start a conversation on how to best utilize experiences and acquired knowledge of those who spent some time abroad and then returned back to Slovakia.

6. The film will showcase stories of two groups of young Slovaks. The first group will consist of those, who, after going to the United States, chose to stay there. The second group will consist of those who, after their stay in the US, chose to return.

7. Group I - Residents of the United States: The focus will be on young, ordinary people who are largely unknown to the Slovak public, yet who are successful in the United States. Most of the featured people have achieved the American dream and their story is one of self-determination, hard work and a simple desire to succeed.

8. An example would be a playwright who got his chance to go to the US on a hockey scholarship from an Ivy League school, but instead has focused on theater and now directs plays in New York City.

Another could be a computer programmer who founded a network of young Slovak professionals in New York, which is the first of its kind, and now organizes concerts featuring Slovak bands, including a recent performance of the Slovak rock band Elan in Carnegie Hall. Or a person, who left Slovakia for Oklahoma during high school and was recently, voted the number 2 equity research analyst on Wall Street.

¶9. The vignettes will showcase the reality of life in the United States, the possibilities it offers, the challenges it brings, as well as touch upon the subject of visas and legal immigration. They could also set a "mirror" to Slovakia and show, how Slovakia is perceived from abroad. Finally, they should battle a stereotype, present in some minds of the Slovak population, that success in the U.S. comes on its own and there is no need to work for it.

¶10. Group II - Returning to Slovakia: The second group of young people featured will consist of those who, after spending some time in the United States, chose to return to Slovakia. One of these stories could feature an Ivy-League educated lawyer, who gained experience in New York and London and was then selected to be the executive manager of one of the commercial TV stations in Slovakia.

¶11. In addition to telling stories of life in the United States, the stories of some who chose to return will be told. What drove their decision to come back? How was it coming back? How were they received? Do they feel an opportunity to share their acquired knowledge and experiences?

¶12. Many of the people the director wishes to showcase have been identified with help from organizations like "Slovensko Nase," an organization with whom Embassy Bratislava has worked that seeks to encourage the return of young Slovaks to their country. The director has support from the Interior Ministry and is seeking support from the Ministry of Culture.

¶13. Post looks forward to working with PA/OBS/BS on this project.

OBSITNIK